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THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE



National Intelligence Council

19 July 1982

NOTE FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Your Request for a Rundown on
ASEAN Institutional Structure
and how the US deals with it

22 JUL 1982

Attached is a memorandum and a longer publication. As you will see, ASEAN is primarily an economic and political institution and has shown remarkable durability despite the absence of much real power. The US deals both bilaterally with ASEAN's member countries and multilaterally with the ASEAN organization.



NIO for East Asia

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DDI# 5899-82
19 July 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM :
National Intelligence Officer for East Asia

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SUBJECT : Your Question on ASEAN

1. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) -- consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand -- was founded in 1967 as an economic, social, and cultural organization, but its main achievements have been political and diplomatic. Initially, it devoted its energies to preventing bilateral squabbles from escalating into serious conflict; in the process member states developed the common objective of preserving ASEAN even at the cost of leaving some problems unresolved. In 1975 the emergence of Vietnam as a potential threat to regional stability, combined with ASEAN's perception of declining US interest in the area, gave the association the momentum and cohesion it previously lacked. As a result, its leaders began to try to exert direct influence on policy and events affecting the region.

2. ASEAN has a system of "Dialogues" at the Cabinet level with the European Community, Japan and the United States. These are satisfactory to the US and do not impede our bilateral relationships with the five.

3. In contrast to its political and economic activities and structure, ASEAN has no formal or informal military functions, and this is likely to remain the case until relations between Singapore and Malaysia become more intimate. However, informal military cooperation without an ASEAN label continues to increase among various groupings of the five members.

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Attachment: a/s

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